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ABSTRACT

A description is given of the objectives, activities, and problems of the Florida Teacher Education Centers (TEC). Teacher education centers are intended to be coordinating bodies, the function of which is to promote and improve the training of educational personnel within school districts by pooling resources from the participating institutions. The TEC places universities and school districts in a collaborative relationship, the provision of inservice to schools being one of the major TEC functions. Following a brief description of the background of the Florida TEC, a discussion is presented of the problems universities encounter with an outreach staff development program. Practical operating procedures for such a program are considered, and some ways of improving the TEC functions are briefly discussed. (JD)

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HIGHER EDUCATION AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT: PROMISES AND PITFALLS

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Occasional Paper No. 5

The University of West Florida is committed to the concept that teacher education is inherently a career-long process. A collaborative effort among universities, community/junior colleges, school districts and community is essential for a dynamic program.

Brief Background of Florida's TEC Movement

The Teacher Education Center Act of 1973 was enacted by the Florida Legislature to encourage collaboration among those involved in teacher education programs. Through a cooperative relationship among universities, boards of education, county staff, and teachers' professional organizations, a Teacher Education Center emphasizes shared planning, decision making, evaluation, and resource utilization. Teacher Education Centers are not intended to be separate institutions. Rather, they are intended to be coordinating bodies, the function of which is to promote and improve the training of educational personnel within school districts by pooling resources from the participating institutions.

The Florida TEC movement now includes all sixty-seven school districts, all nine state public universities, and seven private colleges/universities. There are six multi-district TEC's representing twenty-seven school districts and forty single-district TEC's.[1]

Several features distinguish Florida TEC's from those in other locales:

1. The TEC movement has placed universities and school districts in a collaborative working relationship.
2. The TEC denotes a process rather than a specific site.
3. All activities conducted in the TEC by the university are on a non-credit basis; no hours are earned toward a degree.
4. Many TEC's provide inservice to all educational personnel--from school board members to bus drivers.
5. An annual needs assessment is conducted by each TEC.
6. The decision making rests with a TEC council on which classroom teachers hold the majority of seats.
7. Funds for university participation have come from the State University System's Education and General Budget. There have have been no new monies but rather a shift of existing funds.

The University of West Florida, located in the northwest "Panhandle" area of Florida, has been involved with teacher centers since the inception of the Florida Teacher Education Center concept. Indeed, the passage of the TEC Act meant for UWF more of an official recognition of what already was happening than the beginning of completely new programs. Many cooperative projects had previously been negotiated between UWF and the school districts it serves. Therefore, the theme of the prescribed TEC interaction was not altogether new. The TEC itself, however, was the first official attempt to

promote such partnership within a legitimate structure involving overtly all participating institutions. Since then, UWF's involvement with the TEC movement has been quite intense. In two of the past four years, UWF has been the second highest producer of inservice statewide.

Problems Universities Encounter with an Outreach Staff Development Program

At the outset, problems arise[2] because the majority of such inservice activities delivered by universities have been "one-shot" affairs. The university consultant arrives, delivers a one-day presentation and leaves with little interest in follow-up. There are several reasons for this pattern. First, school districts are unfamiliar with any alternative operational procedure like a TEC. Second, some fear a loss of control over local school matters has to be dissipated by time and trust. Third, many school districts are concerned with survival, rather than system renewal. Fourth, universities find it difficult to change their own internal operating policies and procedures to be able to flexibly respond to school districts requests for assistance. Indeed, Bill Drummond notes that:

> Different organizations, with differing goals, administrative arrangements, norms, customs and language, find collaboration anxiety producing, time consuming and in the short-range inefficient.[3]

The point is that TEC's require patience to develop; long-range inservice programs will evolve, but usually after a lengthy germination period.

A problem faced by universities is how to assign faculty members to TEC service. The state has urged universities to designate such work as a normal part of the faculty members' duties. But the difficulties in making "on load" assignments include:

1. School districts requests for one-day inservice programs, when faculty members must be accounted for in whole quarters or semesters;
2. The unpredictability of inservice requests, when faculty must be assigned several months before TEC requests can be ascertained;
3. The need to adhere as much as possible to the school districts request for a specific consultant, when these expert faculty consultants may not be available.

The question of rewards presents still another potential difficulty. A survey of TEC directors and College of Education faculty members in 1978 indicated that a lack of adequate rewards to university faculty for TEC work was the most serious shortcoming of the TEC system.[4] Faculty

respondents stated that TEC activity was less rewarded by administrators than either research, teaching or service--activities on which faculty evaluation for promotion and tenure are traditionally based. A survey conducted a year later reiterated the problem of adequate rewards.[5]

With respect to monetary rewards, there is a wide range of dollar payout varying from university to university. At some state universities a faculty member may receive in excess of $250 in "overload" monies for six on-site hours; while at another, a faculty member may be granted only a reduced teaching load on campus in lieu of money.

Except for those doing TEC work as a part of assigned duties, The University of West Florida offers faculty members several reward choices including overload or direct payment, expense money, transfers, or other personal services transfers. These transfers are monies that are shifted from the TEC office to the faculty member's department, usually earmarked for use by the specific faculty person who generated the money. OPS transfer monies may be used to hire temporary secretary assistance. Expense transfer monies may be used by faculty for convention travel, books, and teaching materials, etc. The most popular form, by far, is the expense transfer. The point is that some tangible reward must be offered if a program is to be successful.

Concerns relating to delivery style and/or subject content have been raised. Some teachers have complained that a university professor only delivers what he/she knows rather than what TEC participants want or need. However, under the Florida TEC system there are several built-in safeguards:

1. All workshops are keyed to a school district's master plan.
2. All TEC inservice is offered on a non-credit basis only; thus, workshop participants are removed from the "threat" of a grade. As a result many are quite vocal when needs are not being met.
3. An evaluation is conducted after every workshop so feedback is immediate. Adjustments, during the course of a workshop, have been made by professors when the topic was not what the participants desired.

Although a consultant's delivery style is difficult to determine or to control, many faculty members have apparently developed a sensitivity to what a number of writers have said about relating to classroom teachers as colleagues. For example, Roy Edelfelt wrote:

> Schools of Education need to give attention to adult learning. If schools of education personnel are to help teachers and other professionals in schools, they have to develop new ways to treat and associate with school personnel.[6]

According to Winifred Warnat:

> Emphasis is still placed on the cognitive dimensions of learning which represent only 10 to 20 percent of adult learning functions, while the affective dimension encompassing 80 to 90 percent are barely touching inservice education activities.[7]

Thus, effective TEC delivery relies heavily on consultants being in touch with client teachers' feelings and attitudes.

Another problem with collaboration relates to differences in role perceptions. For instance, in the early days of the TEC, many universities complained about not being included in TEC planning. Interviews with College of Education faculty, conducted in 1977-78, revealed feelings that their contribution to TEC was:

> Limited too much to the delivery of specific services, rather than to needs assessment, planning and evaluation. However, when TEC council members were similarly surveyed, an overwhelming majority stated that the university's involvement in needs assessment, planning and evaluation was sufficient. Thus, initially, there was some point-of-view discrepancy between the role colleges of education faculty would like to play in TEC's and what TEC council members expect.[8]

Later on, however, with the increase of respect and trust, TEC's have involved university faculty more in needs assessment, planning, and evaluation.

A final problem concerns the impact of travel distance on any type of outreach inservice program. It is ironic that while many state universities endorse long-distance inservice activities, they do not account for faculty members' fatigue caused by traveling. Ertell spoke to this issue when he stated:

> Problems of geography, including distance and climate may present obstacles to certain types of collaborative practices.[9]

Careful planning is necessary to allow a professor adequate travel time for participating in TEC work. Districts with higher travel costs because of distance also experience a corresponding reduction in on-site time, and thus will consume funds faster for apparently less delivery time. Careful preplanning is necessary to balance these concerns.

Collaboration has been strengthened under the TEC movement. Universities have moved away from an "ivory tower" image in the eyes of school districts and the hard work of school districts is more fully appreciated by universities.

One of the brightest areas has been the impact of "field work" on on-campus curriculum revision. One example of feedback on theory from the field is the portfolio process now required of all UWF early childhood elementary education majors. When a field-based certification project was initiated through TEC's, the portfolio process was brought to the field. After examining the results of the process in the field, the requirement for all elementary education majors was installed.

In the UWF service area, graduate school enrollments have increased in areas of heaviest TEC inservice involvement. Through workshops it seems teachers become familiar with professors with whom they previously had little or no contact. As a result, many such professors have been asked to offer graduate classes in the district. In many cases classes were established in locales where courses had never been previously offered. The interaction further facilitates clarification concerning admissions, fees, course requirements for degree programs, etc.

Since 1974-75 Florida State Board of Education Rules have allowed teachers to extend their teaching certificates through inservice education. With the advent of the TEC, the number of inservice offerings has been greatly expanded. Therefore, TEC's have enhanced the opportunity for teachers to renew their certificates locally.

As mentioned, classroom teachers, by law, must hold a majority of seats on each local TEC council. Through the TEC council, teacher recommendations, so essential to inservice program identification and selection, are obtained. Because of the TEC council and the annual needs assessment, the content of the workshops is more relevant to the client group and more precise. Each TEC council has one university representative. In cases where a school district collaborates with more than one university, each is afforded one seat on the council. This has allowed for university input and has helped the collaborative relationship.

As a result of TEC, many innovative programs have been developed. The Early Childhood Education Project perhaps best exemplifies the goal of TEC activites. In 1976 three TEC directors met with UWF personnel to specify areas of long-range needs. The priority identified was to respond to Florida Senate Bill 96, which later became Florida's Public Education Act of 1975. The Act required inservice training in the area of early childhood education. All of the directors agreed that the districts

they represented did not possess trained personnel or adequate financing to conduct such a program alone. In February 1976, the Early Childhood Project was initiated, a task force was commissioned, funds were provided for support, and goals were established. As a result of the project, eighty teachers have received add-on certification in the area of early Childhood education. The effort was a cooperative one involving both school district and university personnel. The project was awarded the Outstanding Teacher Education Program Award in Florida in 1977 and 1978.

The UWF/Okaloose County Certification Program is another outstanding example of an innovative program that was cooperatively developed between the TEC and UWF. As a result of declining student enrollments and the corresponding reduction and reassignment of staff, several certified teachers were found to be teaching "out of field." In order to correct the deficiency, the Okaloose County TEC and UWF jointly planned and developed a program to provide "add on certification." The program was offered "on-site" in Okaloosa County by UWF faculty members. Again UWF and the local school district worked shoulder to shoulder in planning, developing, and implementing the program.

Practical Operating Procedures for an Outreach Staff Development Program

Under the TEC concept, many practical operating procedures have been established. The majority of these procedures would apply to any university considering an outreach staff development program.

Approximately ninety-five percent of UWF TEC workshops are conducted in school districts. In support of conducting workshops in the field, a study by Gordon Lawrence revealed:

> Inservice programs in schools and on college campuses are equally capable of affecting teacher behavior, but the school settings tend to be capable of influencing more complex behavior changes in teachers.[10]

Lawrence also found that:

> Teacher attitudes are more likely to be influenced in school-based than college-based inservice programs.[11]

UWF has and will continue to employ school district personnel, on an adjunct basis, to conduct workshops. If the university provides all the consultant services, the project may not be truly collaborative and important resources in which school district personnel are more current and/or knowledgeable may be overlooked.

Protocol must be established if the operation is new, and followed. Many programs have failed simply because proper protocol was not followed. A rigid bureaucracy is not advocated but rather channels for communication. All information concerning inservice in a TEC flows in and out of the school district through the TEC director's office. Universities have established two positions: the "contact" person and the "TEC Council Representative." The "contact" person is a faculty member directly responsible to the dean of the College of Education. The contact person receives requests from the field, matches requests to consultants who eventually provide the services, attends to administrative details needed to account for services, and represents the institution at meetings and to other agencies related to TEC.

The TEC council representative is the faculty member appointed to the school district TEC council. The contact person may or may not serve as the TEC council representative.

All communication regarding TEC workshops are channeled through the university contact and the district TEC director. Therefore, a communication network is established.

The placement of the university TEC office and contact is important. In Florida all the university contact people are in the dean's office or report directly to it. This arrangement removes the offices from possible academic department conflicts and politics. It is also an expression of the university's value of the program.

Requests from school districts must be answered promptly. Even a negative response is viewed with more favor than a long delayed positive response. The response time may be viewed by the school district, especially in the early days, as commitment to the program.

Finally, workshops which require participant involvement tend to be more effective than workshops where the participants are passive recipients. It is important to reiterate the importance of teacher involvement in planning and designing workshops. This involvement is obtained via the TEC councils.

Conclusion

Richard C. Williams indicated in 1978 that universities had neither the desire nor traits required to participate heavily in staff development.[12] In Florida nothing could be farther from the truth. Beginning in 1973-74 there were ten FTE faculty positions allocated to TEC activities by the

state university system. This year--1981--the number has grown to 101 FTE faculty positions. To date, not a single university or school district has advocated either reducing or abandoning the program.

Florida's TEC movement has accomplished much to enhance the educational health of the state. Universities and school districts are proud of what has been achieved. To be sure there are still problems to overcome, but they are relatively small when compared to the benefits that have occurred.

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